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SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AFR/SP
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, AND FAS
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH
NAIROBI FOR SFO
NSC FOR JBRAUSE, NSC/AFRICA FOR TSHORTLEY
USUN FOR TMALY
BRUSSELS FOR PLERNER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR - CONTINGENCY PLANNING

KHARTOUM 00002167 001.2 OF 002

Summary

¶1. In July and August, insecurity for humanitarian actors has increased causing USAID to engage non-governmental organization (NGO) and UN partners in discussions on their plans to continue to implement USAID-funded programs and evacuate staff under deteriorating security conditions. End summary.

USAID Organizes Contingency Planning Workshops

¶2. On August 28, USAID held contingency planning meetings in Khartoum with NGO and UN agencies followed by field-level meetings in El Fasher, North Darfur. The following organizations participated in the contingency planning workshops: the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN World Food Program, the UN Joint Logistics Centre, the UN Children's Fund, CARE, Relief International, International Rescue Committee, CHF International, Development Alternatives, Inc., and GOAL.

Summary of Findings

¶3. In the meetings, both UN agencies and NGOs affirmed that contingency and evacuation plans already existed, and stated that they were reviewing plans in light of the current security situation in Darfur. UN agencies and NGOs have well trained and competent Sudanese staff working in Khartoum and in Darfur. Khartoum-based and El Fasher-based staff generally agreed that they would have the ability to continue humanitarian work using their Sudanese staff. Some NGOs expressed concern that if all NGOs were to withdraw their expatriate staff from North Darfur, Sudanese staff would face harassment, intimidation, and may even be prevented from working with the affected populations. Many USAID-supported NGO projects are community-based and can easily be transferred to communities given the strong relationships and capacity already built, which is a strength for USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) programs in Darfur. Additionally, NGOs stressed the importance of donor diversification in order to mitigate funding uncertainties and achieve better program flexibility.

¶4. Lack of adequate communications equipment for many NGOs and inconsistency of the communications network and notification system leaves USAID partners vulnerable. NGOs and UN agencies reported that their relationships with the UN Department of Safety and Security are based on personal contacts rather than institutionalized systems, which is a matter of concern for USAID. An additional concern is that the high turnover of staff compounded by the tendency to deploy first-tour staff without experience in complex emergencies leaves a vacuum of leadership and experience on the ground and contributes to organizational and personal vulnerability. Evacuation plans exist, but only one agency noted that it had practiced it. NGOs with protection programs noted that these programs increase their vulnerability due to the sensitive nature of their work.

¶5. USAID partners strongly recommended maximum flexibility across regions and sectors in future awards to ensure they can adjust rapidly to changing conditions. NGOs and UN agencies see their strong relationships with USAID as an asset and highlighted the benefit of USAID/OFDA's field-based presence. The institutional memory of USAID/OFDA has improved with the deployment of long-term staff to North Darfur, but it was also mentioned that the past high turnover of staff was a drain on the relationships with implementing partners. USAID partners noted that the operational mechanisms of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) with local partners and the small-grants program are an asset in dealing with the volatility in North Darfur. UN agencies and NGOs expressed that funding uncertainty is a major constraint.

Concerns

¶6. USAID is concerned that if NGOs evacuate Sudan, their re-admittance by the Government of National Unity (GNU) is unlikely. Additionally, if NGOs evacuate, many of the gains made in Darfur over the past two years may be lost and there will be no

KHARTOUM 00002167 002.2 OF 002

international witnesses to subsequent events.

¶7. USAID staff and partners share concern that the UN Security Council resolution 1706 will have short and long-term ramifications for the humanitarian space in Darfur.

Follow-Up Actions

¶8. The USAID Darfur Field Office (USAID/DFO) is compiling a report and will distribute the results from the North Darfur contingency planning meetings to all of the contributing organizations. USAID has also asked NGOs to submit solutions to mitigate their organization's vulnerabilities.

¶9. The USAID/DFO intends to replicate the planning process for South and West Darfur in September.

¶10. USAID's goal is to have comprehensive strategies prepared by NGO and UN partners to address beneficiary needs and provide humanitarian services in all of these three scenarios: status quo, evacuation to El Fasher, or evacuation to Khartoum. The USAID staff in the field will continue to monitor the security situation in all three Darfur states, as well as work with the implementing partners to assist them in developing strategies to maximize their capacity to conduct life-saving humanitarian services under changing security situations.

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